Oakmont/ Rt. 187 Intersection: Neighborhood Feedback and Proposals

Neighborhood Statement:

Oakmont Ave. residents vehemently oppose widening Oakmont Ave. near the Old Georgetown Road intersection because:

- Widening Oakmont Ave. will not relieve the existing intersection congestion and will not facilitate access to Navy Medical Center.
- Widening Oakmont Ave. will compromise neighborhood safety for residents and schools and encourage increased vehicle speed.
- The Ayrlawn/Oakmont community does not want to further encourage cut-through traffic in the neighborhood and they further need to protect green space and air quality for the neighborhood and schools.

Proposed Change	Oakmont support	Reasoning
Committed right turn lane from N1H exit up to W. Cedar Lane on northbound Rt. 187 (south side of intersection)	Yes (Option 1)	We agree with this proposed change if done as shown in SHA Option I, which will not impact the fire station driveway. This improvement will relieve back up of traffic northbound on Old Georgetown Road during the evening rush hour between the beltway and Suburban Hospital/Huntington Parkway.
Widening of Rt. 187 northbound on the north side of the intersection	Yes (Option 2)	We agree with this proposed change if carried out as shown in SHA Option 2. This approach will have relatively less impact on the land owner and will not further compromise the minimal front yard of the Walter Johnson historical home.
Three lanes on W. Cedar Lane at intersection westbound	Yes (modified)	We agree with this proposal with an important modification. The center lane should be a left turn and thru lane (not just a thru lane). Frequent illegal left turns from the right lane on Cedar Lane at this intersection demonstrates the need for two left-turning lanes onto soutbbound Rt. 187. This improvement will allow more rapid movement of vehicles through the intersection; however, this change will realize its full potential for traffic flow improvement only if coupled with a sequential green for the Oakmont Ave. traffic rather than a concurrent green.
Widening Oakmont Ave. to three lane width in order to have a committed left turn lane and a thru/right turn lane	No	This will not relieve the traffic problem. Most vehicles exiting Oakmont Ave. go straight or turn left. The vehicles turning left sit in the intersection to yield to the large volume of traffic coming across from W. Cedar Lane. This will not change just because there is a left turn lane. Vehicles going straight across the intersection will force vehicles turning left from W. Cedar Lane onto southbound Rt. 187 to either wait or almost force an accident (as happens often now). Those turning right will still have to wait for those going straight to navigate the intersection. This plan will take away front yards, create a more dangerous street for children to cross, and the vehicles will still have to sit there and do aggressive battle with oncoming traffic from Cedar Lane.
Closure of NIH parking lot entrance on Oakmont Ave.	Yes	Widening the driveway entrance at Old Georgetown Road to allow easy entrance and exit to the NIH Building 82 parking lot will help to clear traffic out of the intersection during the morning rush hour.

Neighborhood Supported Alternative Strategies

1. Sequential (rather than concurrent) green lights at Oakmont Ave. and W. Cedar Lane

- The neighborhood understands that the SHA goal is to maximize the flow of traffic on Old Georgetown Rd.
- Oakmont Ave. can efficiently exit vehicles waiting at the intersection from a single lane
 with a relatively short green light if the vehicles are not yielding to and competing with
 oncoming traffic from W. Cedar Lane.
- W. Cedar Lane will exit vehicles from the intersection much more quickly if they are not yielding to oncoming traffic from Oakmont Ave. Many W. Cedar Lane drivers already believe they should not have to yield when turning left, and there are near miss accidents daily.
- This approach will also likely improve pedestrian safety at the intersection by reducing pedestrian/vehicle competition when pedestrians cross Old Georgetown Rd.
- Following completion of intersection improvements without widening of Oakmont Ave., Montgomery County should trial resequencing the lights to provide a separate green light periods for W. Cedar Lane and Oakmont Ave. to observe the impact on traffic flow at the intersection. This approach may reduce the overall cost of intersection improvements.
- Red light cameras and potentially other camera enforcement at the Oakmont/W. Cedar Lane/ Rt. 187 intersection to deter running of red lights, illegal turns, and failure to yield to pedestrians.
- 3. Prohibit parking on the south side of W. Cedar Lane and create a second thru lane for traffic. This would improve traffic flow to and through the W. Cedar Lane/Rockville Pike intersection and improve pedestrian crossing visibility as well as further secure the NIH perimeter.

Supporting Information: Current traffic issues on Oakmont Ave.

- Motorists on W. Cedar Lane and Oakmont Ave. have a concurrent green light and cars
 can not efficiently empty from Oakmont Ave.
 - Motorists turning left from W. Cedar Lane onto Old Georgetown Road southbound towards downtown Bethesda think they have the right of way and turn in front of oncoming traffic from Oakmont Ave. This occurs throughout the day but is worst during morning and evening rush hour. The drivers are aggressive about it.
 - Motorists turning left from W. Cedar Lane onto Old Georgetown Rd. towards downtown
 Bethesda will often turn left from the right lane (the straight/right turn lane) because they

don't want to wait multiple light cycles in the left turn lane. They do this often without signaling at all since this is an illegal turn. These cars almost clip cars from Oakmont waiting to turn left onto northbound Old Georgetown Rd.

- Because the cars on Oakmont Ave. can not efficiently empty, the line of cars waiting at the light becomes quite lengthy at the busiest times in the morning and afternoon. This also obstructs the driveway to the NIH building that sits at this corner creating a backup on Old Georgetown Road for Southbound traffic.
- The difficulty that vehicles from W. Cedar and from Oakmont experience in clearing the intersection leads to aggressive driving habits that put pedestrians at risk. This is especially true of pedestrians trying to cross Old Georgetown Road. There are many pedestrians at this intersection who walk to and from NIH, the metro, and the YMCA Ayrlawn center.

2. Misuse of the Oakmont Ave./ Rt. 187 intersection

Motorists on W. Cedar Lane who do not want to wait in the long back-up in the left turn lane and do not want to make an illegal left turn onto Old Georgetown Road southbound from the right lane, drive onto Oakmont Ave. and turn around in one of the driveways near the top of the street. These vehicles and their drivers hinder traffic flow both up and down the street and sometimes cause near accidents trying to quickly turn around in driveways to make the next green light.

3. Traffic issues on southbound Old Georgetown Road

- During the evening rush hour, the line of vehicles waiting on southbound Old Georgetown Road to turn left onto W. Cedar Lane is very long - although everyone usually makes it through in two light cycles. There are also problems with Metro buses needing to cut across 3 lanes of traffic very quickly to make it into that turning lane.
- 4. Important Oakmont Ave. traffic facts AND why widening the road at Oakmont Ave does not help commuters heading toward Naval Medical but does increase safety risks to residents
 - Oakmont is already too heavily trafficked, because we have a controlled intersection that facilitates access to neighborhood schools (school buses and private vehicles).
 - Oakmont Ave. has many families with young children ages 10 years and younger. The street already has a safety issue with vehicle speed.
 - The Oakmont/Rt. 187/ W. Cedar Lane is the only controlled intersection that provides efficient access to and from the YMCA Ayrlawn Center.
 - The YMCA Ayrlawn Center is heavily trafficked during the morning, the afternoon rush hour, and the evening. The YMCA Ayrlawn Center runs a large, year-round preschool and before and after school programs that serve Wyngate, Bradley Hills, and Ashburton

Elementary schools. In addition, they have YMCA classes and events that begin in the late afternoon and continue into the evening.

5. Related concerns

The lots on the north side of Oakmont and the south side of Johnson are much less deep than other lots along parallel streets. The front yards on both sides of Oakmont Ave. are relatively small. Putting in a right turn lane will do little to improve vehicle egress from the top of Oakmont Ave. but will do much to destroy the already small front yards and the sidewalk, which is heavily used by pedestrians entering and exiting the neighborhood for work or recreational purposes.